



Tanawha Trail

The Tanawha Trail, stretching 13.5 miles from Julian Price Park to Beacon Heights, parallels the Blue Ridge Parkway on Grandfather Mountain in North Carolina. Tanawha, the Cherokee word for fabulous hawk or eagle, is an appropriate name for this trail that offers hikers spectacular views of distant mountains. Completed in 1993, the Tanawha Trail, like the final section of the Parkway it mirrors, is unique in construction. The trail traverses a fragile and ancient ecosystem and leads hikers through a surprising range of biological and geological terrains. Some sections tunnel through thickets of laurel and rhododendron. Others dip down into remote hardwood coves and then ascend into evergreen glens. Boulder fields and cascading streams punctuate the landscape.

Sections above the Viaduct and along Rough Ridge are strenuous, but overall the trail is an easy to moderate walk. The many accesses from the Parkway let hikers choose as long a section as they like. **To preserve this delicate area, stay on designated paths, bridges, and boardwalks.**

Trail Highlights

From the access point below the Linn Cove Viaduct, the Tanawha Trail passes underneath the Viaduct and ascends steeply up stone steps past an enormous boulder wall. The trail levels off and enters a shady glen thick with birch and beech trees. Beyond the cascading water of Wilson Creek, the trail crosses a clearing filled with huge rock formations. The trail here, accented with flat rocks, is like a flagstone path.

The trail then climbs sharply to Rough Ridge and over a 200-foot long boardwalk. Here the spectacular view into the Piedmont is unobstructed because of the unusual low-growing and fragile mountain-heather ecosystems. It also offers an outstanding glimpse of the Linn Cove Viaduct and several mountains—Grandmother Mountain, Hawksbill, and Table Mountain.

The trail continues on through a stately spruce and hemlock forest into a wooded glen reminiscent of New England. Its rocky landscape is filled with poplars, yellow birch, and oak.

Past Raven Rock, the trail tun-

nels through mountain laurel and rhododendron. This sheltered section then gives way to a more open area with a rock garden—large ferns cascade out of immense boulders.

More thickets of rhododendron lead to the junction of the Daniel Boone Trail, one of many trails on Grandfather Mountain, a private, commercial enterprise. Hiking or camping on Grandfather Mountain requires a permit and fee.

The Tanawha Trail passes several small cascades and crosses Boone Fork Creek. The trail winds in and out of rhododendron and laurel thickets, joins with an old logging road, and passes through a hardwood forest.

In the last section leading to Price Park Picnic Area, the trail breaks out of the woods into open fields. Here, it parallels and crosses Holloway Mountain Road, passes apple orchards, an old grave site, and pasture land, which in spring, is blanketed with numerous wildflowers. Finally the trail joins Boone Fork Road for a short walk into the campground.

IMPORTANT ADVICE

- Lock valuables in the trunk of your car or take them with you.
- Hiking shoes or boots are recommended for most trails, especially for the more strenuous ones. Steep and rocky areas and slippery stream crossings require extra attention and careful footing. Even for trails marked “easy,” it is advisable to wear flat or rubber-soled shoes for comfort and good traction. Wearing sandals, “flip-flops,” or high heels can result in accidents.
- Sudden changes in weather are common in these mountains. Even in mild seasons, rapid dips in temperature and unexpected thunderstorms frequently occur, and at higher elevations the wind and temperature can carry a surprising chill. Be prepared for weather changes by bringing along suitable clothing.
- For your safety and the protection of the resources, stay on established trails. Shortcutting at switchbacks causes soil erosion, disfigures the trail, and makes it difficult for other hikers to find their way. Take advantage of log walkways, steps, or other trail construction. They are there to minimize human impact on the natural envi-

ronment.

- Do not drink the water in streams or springs. Bacterial diseases can be contracted by drinking untreated “wild” waters.
- Lost and found articles should be reported to a Park Ranger.

REGULATIONS

- Parking is limited to designated parking areas or road shoulders. All four wheels must be off the pavement.
- Camping is permitted only in park campgrounds or designated back country sites.
- Dogs and other pets must be on a leash or under physical restraint at all times while in the park. The territorial instinct of dogs can lead to fights with other dogs on the trail. Dogs also frighten hikers and chase wildlife.
- Deposit all litter in trash cans or recycling bins
- Metal detectors are prohibited.
- Natural resources are protected by Federal law. Do not disturb animal and plant life in any way. Hunting, trapping, and carrying weapons are prohibited. Do not interfere with animals by feeding, touching, or frightening them. Do

not cut, deface or damage trees, Leave wildflowers and other vegetation in their natural condition for other hikers to enjoy.

- Historic resources are protected by Federal law. Do not damage, deface, or remove any of these structures, furnishings, or exhibits.



**Help protect and preserve
the Blue Ridge Parkway.
Be alert for uncontrolled fire,
safety hazards, accidents,
and emergencies.**

**Please report such
conditions by calling:
1-800-PARKWATCH**

(1-800-727-5928)
For general Parkway
information, call (828) 298-0398
or visit www.nps.gov/blri on the
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